FISHING'S GREAT IN NEW YORK STATE

New York's Salmon River Fish Hatchery

New York State
Department of Environmental Conservation

Introduction

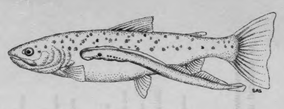
New York's Salmon River Fish Hatchery is one of the most modern trout and salmon hatcheries in North America. This high technology facility will produce more than 4.5 million fish each year to help make sportfishing opportunities in New York State among the best in the world.

The hatchery, which began operation in 1981, is part of a major effort by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to meet the stocking needs of Lakes Erie and Ontario and their tributaries. Prized game species raised at the hatchery include coho and chinook salmon, brown and rainbow trout, and steelhead.

Why Stock the Great Lakes?

Originally, Lake Ontario supported the largest freshwater population of lake-dwelling Atlantic salmon known to man, while both Lake Erie and Lake Ontario were excellent lake trout fisheries. However, by 1900, the salmon had vanished, and, by 1950, the lake trout had also disappeared from the Great Lakes. What happened? Destruction of habitat, over-fishing and predation by parasitic fish called sea lampreys contributed to the disappearance of these spectacular fish.

In 1955, an international Great Lakes Fishery Commission was established to combat the lamprey problem. Lamprey control was initiated in Lakes Superior, Michigan, and Huron. With help from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and guidance from the Fishery Commission, the upper Great Lakes states carried out the first



Salmon with parasitic lamprey

major lake trout restocking program in Lake Superior. In 1966, Michigan launched a tremendously successful coho and chinook salmon stocking program. Spurred on by Michigan's accomplishment, DEC, the province of Ontario, and the Fish and Wildlife Service conducted experimental stocking in Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. Initial results revealed that lampreys were a serious problem in Lake Ontario. Sea lamprey control was started in Lake Ontario in 1971. By the mid 70's, experimental stocking had proven extremely successful. Lake Ontario and Lake Erie demonstrated that they could once again support some of the finest trout and salmon fishing in the world. To re-establish these fisheries, two ingredients were needed: continued lamprey control in Lake Ontario and young fish to stock both lakes. The Fishery Commission committed its resources to Lake Ontario lamprey control, and DEC developed a statewide hatchery modernization plan which included construction of the Salmon River Fish Hatchery and renovation and expansion of several existing hatcheries. The federal government offered financial assistance for the new hatchery through Anadramous Fish Conservation Funds, Heritage Conser-

vation and Recreation Funds, and Dingell-Johnson Fish Restoration Funds. DEC started construction of the $11 million Salmon River Fish Hatchery in 1977.

DEC's goal was to provide a large hatchery that could meet the stocking needs of New York's Great Lakes waters. Today, the Salmon River Hatchery is meeting this challenge. New York's sportsmen and visiting anglers may once again enjoy marvelous trout and salmon fishing in the two lower Great Lakes.

Benefits of this modern hatchery go beyond the fisherman's net. The new Great Lakes trout and salmon sportfishing industry will bring a $100 million boost to New York's economy each year.

Raising Trout and Salmon at the Salmon River Hatchery

Reproductive cycles of trout and salmon guide hatchery operations. Each fall, eggs are acquired from other hatcheries and from spawning fish running from Lake Ontario up the Salmon River to the hatchery. The initial step in the rearing process is incubation of the eggs. Up to eight million eggs can be incubated at one time. The eggs hatch in the winter, and the young fish, called fry, are transferred to "start tanks" to mature. Scientifically planned diets and computer-regulated feeding ensure maximum growth. By late spring, the fish are three-inch "fingerlings." At this point, young chinook salmon are stocked. Coho salmon and trout are reared for another year and are stocked the following spring.

Stocking the fish involves transporting them by truck or helicopter to locations along the shores of Lakes Erie and Ontario and their tributaries. Many are also released directly into the Salmon River. In the food-rich waters of the Great Lakes, the trout and salmon mature into large, healthy fish. Trout weighing up to 20 pounds and salmon which may weigh over 40 pounds provide anglers with year-round sporting pleasure. When sexually mature, two to five years after stocking, many of the salmon and trout instinctively return to spawn in the waters where they were stocked. Those which were stocked in the Salmon River return to the hatchery. A fish ladder from the small stream adjacent to the facility allows them to enter hatchery holding ponds. A series of gates and piping systems enables hatchery staff to move fish from the holding ponds throughout the complex for sorting species, collecting data, and taking eggs. With a new supply of eggs on hand, the rearing cycle begins again.

Stages of Chinook Salmon Development

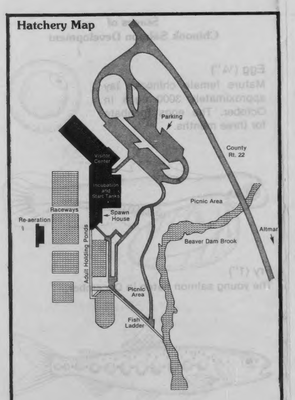
Egg (¼")
Mature female chinooks lay approximately 3000 eggs in October. The eggs incubate for three months.

Fry (1")
The young salmon hatch in December.

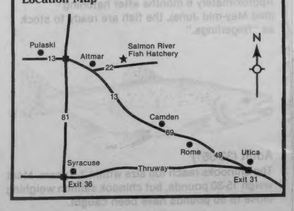
Fingerling (3¼")
Approximately 6 months after hatching (mid May-mid June), the fish are ready to stock as "fingerlings."

Adult (33-36")
The chinooks reach full size within 2-5 years. Most weigh 15-30 pounds, but chinook salmon weighing close to 50 pounds have been caught.

Hatchery Map



Location Map



Visitor Hours and Educational Facilities

The hatchery is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. seven days a week, from March 15 to November 30. Exhibits with informative displays introduce visitors to fish hatchery operation and DEC's Great Lakes Fisheries Management Program. A self-guided tour through the facility allows visitors to witness hatchery operation. Seasonally, visitors may observe fish coming into the hatchery, the egg-taking process, and fish tagging. Most people enjoy visiting the hatchery during spawning season (mid-September through mid-November for salmon and March 15 through April for steelhead, with some variation due to weather conditions). You may call the hatchery in advance to find out which activities are in progress. During your visit, you may witness one of the most remarkable feats of nature as these large fish make their way up tiny streams to return to spawn at the facility where they were hatched and raised.

For information, or to arrange a guided tour (for groups ranging from 15-40 individuals), please contact:
DEC Salmon River Fish Hatchery
County Route 22
Altmar, New York 13302
Telephone (315) 298-5051

Fishing Guide

Fishing in this region is excellent year-round. Peak times include:

- November, March, and April for stream fishing for steelhead
- September and October for stream fishing for salmon
- Early spring through late fall for lake fishing
- April through May and mid-August through mid-October for lake fishing close to shore

Accommodations

Visitors wishing lodging and information about other points of interest in the area should contact:
Pulaski Chamber of Commerce
Pulaski, New York 13142
(315) 298-2213

Other New York Fish Hatcheries

DEC operates eleven other fish hatcheries which you may visit. The system-wide hatchery modernization program will make it possible to stock New York's lakes and streams with 9-10 million trout and salmon and over 100 million warmwater fish each year.

No wonder New York anglers boast, "Fishing is Great in New York State."

Hatchery/Address	Location	Phone	Species
Jim Pond, Rt. 112, Bloomingburg, NY	Centerville, at Sawmill Inn	(914) 891-3358	Atlantic landlocked) salmon
Saranac Lake, NY 12983	NY Rt. 30		
Bath Hatchery, R.D. 2, Bath, NY 14810	Off Rt. 54 3 miles northeast of Bath	(607) 776-7097	Brook, Brown, and Lake trout
Caledonia, NY 14423	Village of Caledonia NY Route 5	(716) 538-6300	Rainbow and Brown trout
Cattaloi Hatchery, Little Falls, NY 12758	Off Rt. 17 8 mi. northeast of Little Falls	(914) 439-4328	Brook, Brown, and Lake trout
Chateaugay Hatchery, Chateaugay, NY 12920	Off Rt. 11 7 mi. east of Chateaugay	(518) 497-6151	Brook, Brown, Lake, and Rainbow trout, Splake
Chautauqua, R.D. 2, Mayville, NY 14757	Off Rt. 17, near Mayville	(716) 789-2705	Muskellunge
Constantia, NY 13044	NY Rt. 49	(315) 623-7311	Walleye, Tiger muskellunge
Randolph Hatchery, Randolph, NY 14772	County Rt. 242, East Randolph	(716) 358-4755	Brook, Brown, and Rainbow trout
Rome Hatchery, Rome, NY 13440	On Rt. 46 4 mi. north of Rome	(315) 337-1390	Brown, Rainbow, and Lake trout
South Otselic Hatchery, So. Otselic, NY 13155	Village of So. Otselic, N.Y. Rt. 26	(315) 653-7727	Largemouth and smallmouth bass, Tiger muskellunge
Van Hornesville Hatchery, Van Hornesville, NY 13475	Van Hornesville, NY Rt. 80	(315) 858-0857	Brook and Brown trout

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